

When The Light Gets Into Your Heart by EvieSmallwood

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Summary:

It was like being a kid again, all huddled up for circle time, only this time the stories weren't about dragons and stars. They were about criminals, and basket cases, and princesses—but the most frightening thing about them was that they were true.

or:

The Breakfast Club AU that no one asked for (but we all deserve).

When The Light Gets Into Your Heart

“...and these children that you spit on,
as they try to change their worlds are
immune to your consultations. They’re
quite aware of what they’re going through...”

- David Bowie

Dear Mrs. Ratliff...we accept
the fact that we had to sacrifice a
whole Saturday in detention for
whatever it was that we did wrong,
what we did was wrong. But we think
you’re crazy to make us write this
essay telling you who we think we
are, what do you care? You see us
as you want to see us...in the
simplest terms and the most
convenient definitions. You see us
as a brain, an athlete, a basket
case, a princess and a criminal.
Correct? That’s the way we saw each
other at seven o’clock this morning.
We were brainwashed...

“Fuck!”

Carol dropped the styrofoam cup and watched it splatter onto the sidewalk, milk pooling and soaking into the soil on either side, Froot Loop constellations innocently staring up at her. She glowered, still wiping at the small spill on her sweater with a finger. *I wasn’t hungry anyway. What does it matter?*

Coolly she stepped over the mess and kept walking toward the school building. She was here. On a god-damned Saturday. And for what? For making out in a store closet? Like those assholes who called

themselves a ‘faculty’ had never done anything like that in their lives?! Hypocritical *fuckwads*.

She yanked the front doors open and walked straight into a muscular form. Steve Harrington jumped out of the way and let out a string of sincere apologies—until he saw her face. “*Carol*. What are you doing here?”

Carol cocked her head, flashing him a grin. “I could ask you the same question, pretty boy. What, was that blonde skank you banged in the supply closet just a *little* too loud?”

Steve blushed. “You don’t know what the hell you’re talking about.”

“Don’t I?”

She said in a way that conveyed some meaning, even though they both knew the words were empty—but they still held some weight, given that Nancy Wheeler (who was obviously, and painfully in love with the idiotic brute Carol had once called a friend) was standing not four feet behind Steve, still pulling off her wooden gloves.

Her cheeks were flushed. She looked effortlessly fucking gorgeous, as always. “Hey there, Princess,” Carol chimed.

Nancy rolled her eyes, which made her stomach churn uncomfortably. Carol hated that Nancy thought she was mocking her. Really, it was just a plain, simple truth; Nancy Wheeler was a princess—but Carol was the fucking queen.

“Screw you,” Nancy threw out, like a bad hand in a card game.

Steve jumped. “Nancy,” he muttered, eyes flirting nervously to her face. “What are you doing here?”

“Detention.”

“What? *How*?”

“Does it matter?” She shrugged her bag from one shoulder to the other, looking miserable. “Ratliff said to meet her in the library. We should go.”

Steve nodded, and followed the petite girl through the halls. Carol liked this part of detention; walking through the empty halls and seeing the school the way the janitors saw it—an empty, vast place, with slowly dimming fluorescent lights and drawn on lockers. Cold. A ghost town.

The library, which Carol really only bothered with her Freshman year and hadn't set foot in since (if she could avoid it), was vacant, aside from two boys. One, Carol was expecting: Billy Hargrove was sprawled out over a tabletop, legs crossed, staring at the ceiling.

The other was less welcome but not wholly surprising; Jonathan Byers, the town perv. Probably he'd gotten caught taking pictures of the girls in the locker rooms or something. He was dressed in all black, as always, with his head down. He looked like something that had grown wrong; all crooked and bent and pale. It was sad, really.

Carol walked ahead of them, blatantly ignoring Billy and plopping down in the front row. Steve sat beside her, a little hesitant. "There are like, three other tables."

He shrugged. "I don't want to sit by people I don't know."

"You know Billy."

"I *hate* Billy."

"Say it one more time and I'm summoned," Billy glanced at them from his own spot, grinning. She hated that grin. She hated him—probably even more than Steve did. But she needed him, too. She needed to be safe, and being safe meant being under the arm of the worst asshole in the school, somehow. Maybe it was because she was an asshole too, most times. They fit together. Or maybe it was just her poisoning herself as always, and making up delusional excuses.

"Finally accepted that you're the devil incarnate?"

Billy stuck his tongue out at her, because he didn't get it. Because she was like this with everyone. Because she hated the fucking world.

"Would you guys shut up?"

Carol glared at Nancy, and slowly pulled her gum from between her front teeth in a long pink string. Then she looped it back. "Problem, sweetheart? Company not to your liking?"

"Expecting more nerds, I bet," Billy piped up.

"Fuck off," Carol snapped. *Only I insult this one, and only because I don't mean it.*

Nancy, appearing totally bewildered, shook her head and started rooting through her bag. There was something about her sitting there, with her grey trench hanging over the desk and her wavy brown hair falling down her back (and smelling, even from this far away, of roses). She was a mess, but she was a hot one, and Carol was just fine with that.

The double doors in front of them were thrown open. Mrs. Ratliff emerged in all of her mothball-infused glory, squinting down at them over her hooked nose. "Children," she wheezed. "I expect most of you," she glanced at Carol's side of the room, "are familiar with the specific practices of detention here at Hawkins High. I will familiarise the others with the rules: there is to be no talking, no eating until lunch time, no roaming the halls—if you must relieve yourself, please seek me out and I will give you a key to your respective lavatory. You are not to leave this room. You are to sit here, quietly and obediently. No sleeping."

At that, Ratliff eyed Billy. Carol sighed. "Today, I want to try something new," Ratliff went on. "You Are all to write an essay of no less than one thousand words, describing who you think you are."

Billy scoffed. *I know what I would write for you,* Carol thought bitterly, *douche, douche, douche, douche, douche...*

Nancy Wheeler raised her hand. Of course. "Is the essay supposed to be in standard format?"

"Of course, Ms. Wheeler," Ratliff frowned. She walked toward them and began to pass out papers. "And I expect no profanity. This is an essay, not one single word repeated one thousand times."

Fuck.

"My office is just across the hall," Ratliff said. "I will be watching you, and closely."

With that, she slipped out. Carol pursed her lips, sighed through her nose, and went back to playing with her gum.

"Can you stop that? It's disgusting."

Carol huffed. "Perturbed?"

Nancy rolled her eyes. She glanced down at her paper and began writing. Carol leaned over, glad they were close, and smirked. "You're including your middle name? *Margret*?"

"One less real word I have to write," she retorted.

"Hey, does this one talk?"

They turned and saw Billy poking Jonathan Byers in the chest with his pencil. The guy still hadn't spoken. "Stop it," Carol snapped. "You'll wake him from his trance and he'll murder you, or something."

Nancy slammed her hand down on the desk. "Oh, would you shut up?! You don't know him!"

"And you do?"

The girl hesitated. She swallowed. "Our little brothers are friends. Will is very sweet."

"Yeah? Ever heard of a bad apple, honey?"

"You're a bitch."

"He's a *creep*."

Steve whacked Carol, albeit lightly, on the shoulder. "Hey, would you lay off?"

"What, is he your boyfriend?"

“Who cares? The ape poking him is yours,” Nancy spat.

“To call Billy an ape is an insult to apes,” Steve said. “He’s...”

Billy raised his eyebrows. “Gonna kick your ass? You got that right.”

Steve scoffed, and Billy lunged forward, still in his seat. At that, Steve jumped out of his own and stood. Billy matched him, and they loomed before one another. “You guys are ape shit,” Carol snapped.

Billy managed a small, huffing laugh. Steve looked sickened. “You come any closer and you’re totalled.”

“Totally?”

“*Totally.*”

“Hey! What’s going on in there?”

They all glanced at the doors, and then at each other. Billy and Steve slowly lowered themselves into their seats once more. Carol waited, more tense than she wanted to be. She hid it by examining her nails (which were fine, as always).

Steve drummed his fingers on the table. The faint sound of pencil scratching paper could be heard. Carol stared at her own, which was still blank, and then leaned back in her seat. She stretched leisurely, letting her hair fall back the way she knew got Billy’s attention.

He tapped her shoulder a minute later and she smirked. “Wanna find someplace and screw?”

“No.”

“Yeah? Why not?”

“‘Cause I’m a good girl,” Carol said, “and I’m too busy writing my essay to get railed by a dumb fuck up.”

“Oh, so now I’m a fuck up?”

“Y’always were, sweetie,” she smiled. “Now go away.”

Steve mock-gagged. “You two sicken me,” he hissed.

“You know what sickens me?” Carol leaned toward him. “That stack of skin mags under your bed, and that poster of the girl in the bikini on your wall, and all your ex-girlfriends I had to get to know and be nice to while you made your way into their pants and then dropped them a week later.”

Steve stared at her for a long moment, and she could almost see the hurt she’d caused. For a moment, it felt pretty good. And then she remembered the eight year old kid who bought her ice cream cones on hot summer days, and the guy who tried to teach her guitar in seventh grade. He pushed away from their desk, chair scraping the white tile floor, and moved over—plopping down beside Jonathan Creeper.

“So-rry,” she said.

“Bullshit.”

Carol turned to Nancy. “I’m sorry, but do you know him?” She waited expectantly. “No? Then shut your mouth.”

“Just because he’s done shitty things, doesn’t mean you get to be a shitty person.” Nancy folded her arms over her chest, eyes now scanning the rows and rows of books—most of which were never read. “Two wrongs don’t make a right.”

Billy laughed. “What, did your daddy tell you that by the fire one night?”

Carol caught on. “Were you huddled together in your little log cabin, you and Creepo back there?”

Nancy snapped. “Go to hell! You don’t know *anything* about me, okay?!”

“Pipe down in there!” bellowed Ratliff.

Carol lowered her voice into a hiss. “Yeah? But aren’t you just another dumb suburban girl who wishes she was anyone else? Who thinks she’s *so much better* because her mom makes pot roast once a

week and puts doilies up on the wall?”

Nancy’s cheeks were flaming. Her chest rose and fell rapidly, and her right hand gripped the pencil tightly. For a moment, Carol actually felt worried.

“I said lay off her,” Steve warned.

Nancy rounded on him, then. “I don’t need you to protect me,” she growled.

Billy smirked. “That’s what they all say.”

“Keep talking and I’ll cut your balls off,” Carol warned.

“Stop that!”

“Stop *what?!?*”

“Being horrible to me one second and defending me the next!”

“Oh, did you want those demeaning comments from the world’s largest ass-wad?” Carol shook her head. “Excuse me if I thought I’d spare you the pain.”

“Pain? Like what he says means anything?”

“Maybe it doesn’t to you.”

“You’re right, it doesn’t.”

“Fine.”

“*Fine!*”

They looked away from one another, both fuming. Across the way, Mrs. Ratliff rose from her desk chair and walked down the hall. Her shoes echoed. Billy’s head peeked up with interest. He grinned to himself and quickly rose out of his seat.

“What are you doing?!” Nancy hissed. “We’re not supposed to move!”

“Does it look like I care, geek?”

Nancy flushed. They watched as Billy fiddled with the door. Within seconds, it slammed shut of its own accord.

“What the hell, asshole?!” Steve demanded.

“Hey, I didn’t do anything,” Billy slipped back into his seat.

“Fix the door,” Nancy said. “*Now.*”

“Aw, pipsqueak—I just don’t think you get it; little girls don’t scare me.”

The door burst open. Ratliff stormed in. “Why is this door closed?!”

“I don’t know, m’am,” said Billy. “Why don’t you bend over and have a look around it. Maybe a screw fell, or something.”

Ratliff’s lips pursed so tight they turned white. Carol bit her lip to keep from laughing, and noticed Nancy doing the same. *So the pretty princess isn’t perfect after all.*

“*Why is that door closed?*” Ratliff eyed them. “Wheeler! Why?”

Nancy pulled an innocent face. “We were just... sitting here. Like you told us to.”

“That’s right,” Billy grinned. “Ain’t moved a muscle.”

“I don’t believe this.” Ratliff glanced at the door.

“Hey, the world’s an imperfect place. Screws fall out all the time—you’d know.”

“Would you like to return next Saturday, too, Hargrove?” Again, she scanned them, and settled on the hunched over figure in the back. “Byers! What happened with the door?”

Byers stared at her, face blank. Carol spotted a muscle in his jaw twitch, which almost made her jump.

“He doesn’t talk, m’am,” said Steve.

“Like hell he doesn’t.”

“Ooo,” Carol grinned. “Mrs. Ratliff has a wild side, everyone!”

Ratliff pointed an old, gnarled finger at Carol. “You’re pushing it, young lady.”

Carol shrugged. Her fingers twitched in her lap. She realised she was aching for a cigarette. “Why don’t you push it?” She suggested. “Maybe it’ll stay put.”

Ratliff, who was too old to do much of anything, brushed off her skirt. “Harrington! Grab a chair!”

They spent the next minute trying to position the chair against the door. It was far too light to hold the weight, and slid away when Steve let go. Ratliff huffed and pointed to a bookshelf, which Steve begrudgingly began to push toward the door.

“Mrs. Ratliff,” Billy piped up, “I do believe that’s a fire hazard. You wouldn’t want...” he pretended to count them, “five student deaths on your record this late in your career, would you? They’d put you in a home, I bet.”

Carol’s eyes widened. Billy was brash, sure, but Jesus.

Ratliff didn’t seem to hear the last part, though. “Put it back,” she snapped at Steve. “What are you thinking?!”

“God, *fine*,” Steve pushed it back where he’d found it and wiped his sweaty palms on his jeans.

Ratliff glared at them all. “If I hear anything,” she warned, “You’ll all be here every Saturday until the end of the *semester*.”

Billy sucked in a mock-shocked breath. He placed his hand over his heart and, once the door shut behind Ratliff, started laughing. Carol couldn’t help but join in. Nancy started giggling, and that sounded like sunshine and picnics and a life of kisses and love Carol had never had, so she laughed harder.

Even Jonathan Byers cracked a smile, and suddenly the world wasn’t such a dark place.

Steve frowned down at his paper—or the sketch, more like. It was just pencil, and only depicted the back of her head. Her hair, which was lightly curled and beautiful. And so close. She was so damn close, as always, and as per usual he was just letting her slip through his fingers.

“That’s pretty good.”

Steve jumped. He glanced at the guy beside him. Steve knew Jonathan Byers the way everyone in this school did; a weird loner with a drunkard for a dad. But his voice was soft, as were his eyes, and his smile would have made Steve’s knees buckle had he been standing up when he’d seen it.

They couldn’t be heard over Billy’s singing and the bickering of the girls. Steve chewed his cheek. “You think so?”

“Yeah,” Jonathan eyed it, and then glanced to Nancy. “My little brother draws a lot. He’s good, too.”

Steve nodded. “That’s cool.”

Jonathan went back to biting his sleeve. His body radiated warmth, and Steve, who had been cold since the start of November, wanted nothing more than to scoot a little closer. He didn’t know why. He didn’t want to think about it.

But he did. Just a hair closer. Just a hair better.

“How come you don’t talk?”

“I—” Jonathan met Steve’s gaze, which seemed to take a lot of effort on his part. “You’re the first person who’s asked, you know that? I guess that’s why.”

Steve swallowed. “You should talk more.”

“I don’t like to be told what to do.”

“I didn’t mean it like that,” he hurried, “I just... people who don’t say

much usually have a lot to say, right?"

A shrug. "Usually."

Billy leaned back in his seat so that it slapped the desk behind him. Steve glared. He leaned over his drawing once more and kept at it, before it was snatched from his grip out of nowhere.

Billy started snickering. "Oh my god," he breathed, "you've got the hots for the *geek*?!"

"Give it back, Billy."

But it was too late. Nancy had overheard. She broke off from her argument with Carol and turned around, brows scrunched together in that way which meant she was thinking a lot, and taking everything in too quickly. "Excuse me?"

"Harrington here is in *looove*!"

"Hey, he said give it back!"

Billy stopped laughing, and Nancy's surprised face increased tenfold. They all found their eyes straying to Jonathan, a little disbelieving, and a little relieved.

"I don't think I will," Billy said.

And then he was running. Steve burst out of his chair and went after him, following the sounds of his footsteps through the library and out the back exit. They burst into the hallway. Billy's laughter echoed around corners, seemingly amped to full blast (but maybe that was because everything else was so quiet).

Steve managed to gain on Billy. He mentally thanked years of baseball practices and basketball games. Steve grabbed Billy by his jacket and yanked him back. Billy twisted. They both ended up slamming against the wall, panting.

Billy eyed Steve. He handed him the paper. It was a little crumpled from where he'd grasped it, but otherwise fine.

Steve took a moment to catch his breath, heart racing.

“Hey Billy?”

“Yeah?”

“You got any pot?”

At that, they both cracked up deliriously, resting their arms against their knees and letting months of pent up anger seep out in the form of careless youth. Billy stood, brushed off his jeans, and offered Steve a hand.

They were a mess of a circle, the five of them; sprawled out on the floor, sitting on top of coats and resting against too-full backpacks. Nancy took a drag from her joint, letting the smoke fill her lungs, and then exhaled. She watched it curl up toward the ceiling. There was something so obscene and unfair about that. *It can fly but I can't? What the fuck?!*

She started to giggle. Carol nudged her leg with a red converse, giving Nancy cause to glance over. She took in that red, disheveled hair glinting in the light, and her cherry-glossed lips which so meekly held her blunt in place. “What are you laughing at, Princess?”

All of the joy shrivelled up in her stomach. She righted herself. “Nothing.”

Across from them, Jonathan Byers was carefully rolling another joint for Billy. He passed it over. “You’re good at that,” she found herself saying.

Jonathan smirked (and she might have died a little, but she wasn’t too sure). “I smoke a lot,” he said, lighting up.

Carol kicked her again. Her eyes were calculating, this time, which Nancy didn’t like. “What did you do to get thrown in here with us?”

Nancy shrugged. It seemed stupid now, anyway, given what she was

doing. "Ratliff caught me smoking behind the gym," she said.

Billy started hacking. "That fucking hypocrite!" he spat. "The bitch goes through like four packs a day!"

She threw him an exasperated glance, which turned into her head falling against the metal leg of a desk. She winced, rubbing the sore spot. The world was momentarily sharper, and she was suddenly aware of how much the library now smelt like weed.

"Where do you think she went?" Steve wondered aloud. His eyes weren't on her, which somehow made her both disappointed and grateful.

"Ratliff? Up her own ass, maybe," Jonathan shrugged. "Who gives a shit."

Billy chuckled. He pointed at Jonathan. "You got a mouth on you, you know that?"

"Most people have mouths," he deadpanned. Steve snorted, eyes alight with admiration. It had crossed Nancy's mind a few times that day that they were both idiots, but it didn't matter.

Carol snubbed the end of her joint and squinted at Jonathan. "Come here, freak," she said, "I'm gonna doll you up."

Jonathan raised his eyebrows. "Excuse me?"

"What, do you have a problem with wearing make up, or something?"

"No," he frowned. "But my name is Jonathan. Not freak."

Carol sighed. "Fine. I'm sorry. *Jonathan.*"

Jonathan shrugged, took a sharp puff, and slid over to Carol. She fumbled around in her designer purse, which was red to match her shoes and lips and hair. Everything about Carol Weathers was coordinated and perfect, except the secrets she hid behind her eyes.

Nancy watched as she laid out her things; some powder and lipsticks,

blush... other pink and blue containers, lightly dusted with makeup that Carol had forgotten to wipe off after she touched up.

“Eyeshadow first,” she said, grabbing a brush. Jonathan sighed and closed his eyes.

“Fucking fairy,” Billy muttered, seemingly bemused.

“Fucking homophobe,” Nancy retorted, tone harsh. Billy scoffed, but she could see the cut she had made. He stopped talking.

She found herself seated beside Carol, softly applying a pink accent to Jonathan Byers’ pale cheeks. Carol had given him an eyeshadow to match, and was working steadily on his lips. They looked soft enough to kiss, and suddenly she wanted to. Badly.

And so she did.

She wasn’t sure why. Maybe it was the pot. Maybe it was his weird mystique. Maybe she was just an idiot, or wanted to prove Billy wrong. But one thing was certain; she, Nancy Wheeler, was kissing Jonathan Byers’s newly glossed lips. And he was kissing her back.

One of his hands was on her waist, and fiddling with the edge of her sweater. His fingers brushed her waist, making her shiver. Nancy let the makeup brush fall. She cupped his cheek, and put one arm around his neck, pulling herself into his lap.

She couldn’t see anything with her eyes closed, but she could feel the whole world in her arms; in his warm skin and his soft hair and the way he kept trying to stifle smiles. She could feel a future as she moved her hand down to rest over his heart, and knew every song with the rhythm of its beat.

Nancy drew away and looked down at him. She played with the hair at the nape of his neck, never taking her eyes off of his own.

“I have to admit, I wasn’t expecting that.”

She shrugged. “You’re a good kisser.”

Jonathan grinned. “Thanks. So are you.”

Carol paced the length of the bookshelves, cigarette in hand. She was crying and she knew it. She could feel the tears streaming down her cheeks as she ranted on; spilling out for all of them to see, even though she really didn't want them to.

"I *hate* Hawkins High. I hate *Hawkins*," she turned on her heel, tapping ashes away. "Doesn't anyone understand that? Don't any of you just feel stuck?"

"You feel stuck," Billy said. "Oh poor you, with your pearl earrings and your fancy car. You know what I have? You know. You've seen my family. My house."

Carol groaned in exasperation. "I *know* you have problems you shit-head!" She slammed her door against the floor. "I have problems too!"

Steve rolled his eyes. "What? Your curfew?"

Carol stared at him for a long moment, and then slowly lowered herself down so that she was once again sitting in their band of truths. "My mom hit me the other day," she said. "Hard. Real hard."

It was like being a kid again, all huddled up for circle time, only this time the stories weren't about dragons and stars. They were about criminals, and basket cases, and princesses—but the most frightening thing about them was that they were *true*.

"My dad hit me for the first time when I was three," Steve said. Carol had known that for a few years now, but she hadn't ever thought he would just say it. "I wet the bed one too many times, I guess."

"I was four," Jonathan said. "Dropped a can of beer on the carpet."

"My dad never hit me," Nancy said, "he just doesn't know I exist. I mean, sometimes that's good. But other times... it just feels pointless, you know? Like, my mom will throw these Christmas parties every year—and they're really elaborate and festive, and my brother and I would almost always fuck them up somehow... and she'd go around the room in her brand new dress, talking to everyone, and laughing

at their stupid jokes—and he'd be sitting there, in that fucking chair, drinking. Barely even there at all. Sometimes, at dinner, he'll just stare into space. It takes me dropping swears to get his attention. It's fucked."

Steve frowned. "My dad fucked three of his secretaries," he said. "My mom knows. She still won't divorce him."

"Dependent or in denial?" asked Jonathan.

"Both, I guess." Steve lit another cigarette. "What about your mom?"

"She didn't know he would hit us. Then she did. Then he was gone. Kind of like magic, but a little more underwhelming. I used to build the whole thing up, you know? Like, I'd be this build sixteen year old, and I'd finally get my revenge and kick the shit out of him. And then, one day—" he started giggling, still a little high, "—my five foot three mom just points her finger at the door, and he's gone. It was so anticlimactic."

Steve hummed. "I don't know why anyone hates you," he said.

"I hate me," Jonathan replied, suddenly stoic. Carol rolled her eyes.

Nancy sighed. "Everyone hates themselves until they stop hating everyone else."

A silence fell. Carol took them all in—those three who were sitting so close, closer than she had ever known three strangers to sit—and Billy, who was dead asleep. "Let's dance, kiddos," she said.

They did dance, and it was ridiculous, but it was sort of everything. There was no hate, or pity, or jealousy. Just acceptance of stupidity and selfishness and brashness. It all sort of worked out even though it shouldn't have.

Steve rested his head against a bookshelf, panting. The collar of his shirt was soaked through with sweat. He felt small and safe tucked into the little corner of the library, where none of them could see him

—none of them, at least, except for Jonathan, who lowered himself to the ground beside Steve.

“Long day?” Jonathan asked.

“Yeah,” Steve nodded. “You look pretty, by the way. I don’t know if I told you.”

Jonathan laughed. “Hey,” he said, nudging Steve, “you’re kind of not a douche, you know?”

“Good to hear.”

Jonathan laid his legs out flat. Steve glanced at his hands, which were resting on his thighs. Jonathan kept scratching his jeans, creating a soft, goosebump-inducing sound. Steve shivered and reached for him on instinct. “Stop, please.”

“Okay.”

He was close. Closer than close. Five inches, maybe, or three. Then their noses were touching, and it was less than that. Steve kept holding Jon’s hand. He intertwined their fingers slowly, swallowing.

They hovered. “Have you ever done this before?”

“Kiss?”

“A boy.”

“Oh. No.”

“I have,” he thought of that boy; of his curly blonde hair and his bright green eyes and the name he couldn’t quite remember. That had been playing in the sandbox. This was making out in the library.

Yeah. Making out in the library.

They crashed together and then melted. Steve sucked in a sharp breath, having forgotten to breathe at all before hand. Jonathan tasted like oranges and smoke and weed, and he felt good this way; vulnerable and new and imperfect.

Steve was slow about riding Jon's shirt up, but soon enough his fingers were tracing the bones of Jon's spine. They were prominent, and he was warm. He was like nighttime to look at and sunset to hold.

"She wasn't lying," Steve broke away. He rested his forehead against Jon's, tracing patterns onto his sides. "You are good at this."

Jonathan grinned, and then they were right back at it, only this time more forcefully, because it mattered more for some reason. It felt weighted. His heart was pounding almost painfully.

"You good?"

Steve nodded. He wiped his lips. "Yeah."

"Need a minute?"

"Don't be arrogant."

Jonathan huffed. He had dimples. "I'm being genuine, I swear on my life."

"You're a bad liar."

"You're a bad heterosexual."

Steve broke. He felt both melancholic and happy, and something about that made it all the more hilarious. Jonathan laughed with him. It was easy.

They helped one another up. Jonathan let go of his hand. "What does this mean, then?"

Steve shrugged. "I'm in love with two people. I don't know."

They stood side by side in the bathroom, each staring at their own reflection. Nancy pushed flyaway hairs back where they belonged and tucked her shirt back in. Carol, beside her, was applying her fiftieth

layer of gloss.

"I was wrong about you," Carol said, after a minute.

Nancy frowned. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, I took one look at you and thought: 'There's another smart girl who's just here to look pretty and get good grades.' Which is true. But I mean... there's more to you. A lot more."

"There's more to you, too," Nancy said. "And... you're not a bitch. I'm sorry I said that." She pursed her lips.

"Wanna go on a date sometime?"

Still blunt. I was right about that. "Milkshakes?"

Carol grinned. "Pinky promise, Princess."

Nancy curled her pinky around Carol's. "Don't call me that."

Carol stared at her, and the moment felt long. It felt like years. "Gotcha, babe. See you around school, then."

With that, she slipped out of the bathroom, red hair whipping around the corner and out of sight. Nancy chewed her lip, grabbed her backpack, and followed her outside. Only Carol wasn't there. She had gone, already. Disappeared, because she was magic like that.

Those were stupid thoughts, but there was truth to them.

Nancy waited on the curb, shivering in the cold. It felt weird to be alone. It felt wrong.

But it didn't last, of course, because soon enough her mom's station wagon was pulling up. Mike was in the middle seat. He leaned through the gap and grinned at her. "Have fun being a delinquent?"

"Move," Karen chastised.

Nancy slipped inside. The car was warm. "Thanks for picking me up," she said breathlessly.

Karen shrugged. "I don't mind. Just... no smoking at school, okay?"

Nancy met her mother's eyes. They both smelled the weed, and maybe perfume. And they both started laughing at the same time. "Turn the radio on," Karen instructed. She pulled out, and they left the school behind.

*Dear Mrs. Ratliff, we accept the fact
that we had to sacrifice a whole
Saturday in detention for whatever
it was we did wrong. But we think
you're crazy to make us write an essay
telling you who we think we are.
You see us as you want to see us...
In the simplest terms, in the most
convenient definitions.*

But what we found out is that each
one of us is a brain...

...and an athlete...

...and a basket case...

...a princess...

...and a criminal...

*Does that answer your question?
Sincerely yours, the Monster Hunters.*

Author's Note:

Just a bunch of crazy kids, trying to figure themselves out.

This was originally written for a Writer's Guild event day, in like August or something. In my first version, John Bender's character was played by Tommy H. — but I was transferring the story from tumblr to ao3 and thought that Billy better suited the role. I've done my best to find and replace, but if you see any

straggling “Tommy” drops, let me know.

To clarify, if it wasn’t obvious:

The princess, A.K.A. Claire Standish: Carol Weathers

The brain, A.K.A. Brian Johnson: Nancy Wheeler

The athlete, A.K.A. Andrew Clark: Steve Harrington

The criminal, A.K.A. John Bender: Billy Hargrove

The basket case, A.K.A. Allison Reynolds:
Jonathan Byers

This story does take a couple of lines directly from the Breakfast Club (I.e., “You’re totalled.”). All credit to John Hughes and the rest of the cast/crew for those.

I hope you enjoyed this crazy AU. If so, leave kudos and/or comments!

Lots of love,

Ely